

How would this do? What do you mean by that? Now he might make a standard generalization or second he may have had a hard time with a church member. Or third, the person who has believed everything he has heard about church members through the years. We have some fellows on the radio today who come along every day and if you listen to what they say about church members, they are all hypocrites. In fact, there are none righteous except those who speak.

Whatever is behind this statement is the thing that we should seek to uncover. We must do our best to understand what is really behind this excuse.

We might show them that this might be true. There are hypocrites. Second, we might show them the absurdity of this objection. There is counterfeit money. Third we might show them their individual responsibilities - Romans 2:1, 14:12, 1 Peter 4:17.

What about the excuse - I don't believe all the Bible. Now are we to just defend the scriptures without finding out what's behind this statement? It may be in the first place to get rid of you; second, it may be a confession of real ignorance. And third, it may be that he is confused because of somebody's writing about the lost books of the Bible. ~~It~~ it may be some person who has had a course or two in science and it seems has a difficulty between science and the Bible. Ask him what he

Luke 19:1-10

Not all of the difficult aspects of witnessing are to be found within the Christian. Even the most dedicated, interested soul-winner will be discouraged. By the kind of responses that he receives.

When you talk to people about Christ, you will discover that we're living in a difficult world. The world today shows an indifference to vital religion as in the early centuries. The Christians were persecuted because they held that religion was important to life. In contrast today, the churches are crowded. We have freedom of worship without fear.

But the thing that frightens us today is the self-centeredness in the world in which we live. We put God on the circumference. And this is really the opposite of righteousness with God. We make it man-centered. Churches try to reach people by telling them how good they are instead of calling for the death of self.

We find that our people we approach are pre-occupied with a lot of important things. People call themselves successes or failures on the basis of the money they make or certain goals they reach. In terms of houses, cars, boats, furniture. In other words, physical security.

Jesus had an interview with Zaccheus. And we should find encouragement for here was a man living in an evil world. And

yet, if we check his life closely, we will discover that he was a hard one to win.

We ought to share some of the responses which different people have made when approached about becoming a Christian. I give you this illustration first. One Thursday night, Mrs. John Jones had made a profession of faith in Christ. And had asked for believers baptism. So on Friday morning the pastor went to visit her husband in the shop. And invited him to the baptismal service. As he talked to him about the wife's decision he discovered that the man was not a Christian. And before he could say anything else, the man said, "Preacher, I'd like to be a Christian more than anything I know; but I can't. My business takes all of my time."

Now Mr. Jones' excuse is just one of many that can be given for not following Christ.

The Christian who witnesses to people will hear some excuses. What are some of the excuses most often heard? Or most often given? Could you mention some of those at this point?

What about I am good enough already? I couldn't hold out. There are too many hypocrites in the church. I don't accept all of the Bible. There are some things I need to straighten out first. Or not now. Or Sunday is my only day off.

Now evaluate these excuses and responses that we have just

listed. What might be behind them? Different people may use different excuses or the same excuse. A person may use the same excuse and yet have a (different) meaning. For that excuse.

For example the excuse, the church is full of hypocrites. Now that (may mean) that the man may want you to leave him alone. He's trying to get you to just be still. Or he may be thinking that a (church member ought to be a perfect) individual.

But remember an excuse often hides the real problem. Let us take this approach. The woman of Samaria as Jesus talked to her. What did she try to do? She tried to keep pointing him away from herself. Her failure, her many husbands. She even brought up the matter of worship.

Now if we are going to deal with this excuse and other excuses, should we just match wits with them? Or are we supposed to be witnessing of what God has done through Christ?

We should remember excuses are just (secondary).

We must remember also that an excuse may not be answered the same way every time. We might memorize a standard answer. But two people may have a different viewpoint concerning these excuses that people give. There are hypocrites in the church. Now we would like to retaliate and say to the person, well, you aren't perfect yourself. Well, that would be true in a way but it wouldn't be the easy, wise, most likely thing to do.

Why would you say to a person like that?

dual. What do you think of Zaccheus as a prospect? How would you evaluate him in today's world? Now his mother had given him a name which meant pure. But he was a long ways from answering his mother's prayer. The fulfillment was disappointment. He had even abandoned the religion of his father.

He had bid on a job and had been awarded the tax collector's job and he rose to the chief collector. He was branded a cheat, a liar, a traitor, a robber, and a sinner.

Now just suppose someone had put his name on a Sunday school prospect card and turned it in. What do you think the reaction would have been?

Suppose Zaccheus' name had been presented at prayer meeting for somebody to pray for. That he might be saved. Everything would have been quiet.

Every town has its quota of Zaccheus's. They never attend; they never show any interest; they work at jobs that church people question. And he not only does not have any contact with the church but he doesn't want any contact with the church.

Why do you suppose Jesus and Zaccheus got together?

What was the thing that caused Zaccheus to want to see Jesus

We might suggest some of them at this point.

Some people have felt that it was curiosity. That this might have gotten him out of his office into the street. But it

means. What do you mean by this statement? Now this question will help to clarify just what he means about the Bible. Whether or not he believes the word of God as God's book.

A lost person who has no idea of the content and the arrangement of the Bible may be confused by people who quote little snatches of scripture here and there. Through the book to Revelation. The Bible is not like a first-aid manual. That you refer to certain accidents and ailments. But it is an inspired book which deals with the redemption. And it comes back to the state that a man needs and of God's requirements.

What about the statement - I am good enough already. This is kind of a negative view. Goodness, in certain things which he does perhaps - drinking, gambling. Now a good answer here might be the rich young ruler. Jesus called him to follow him but we see that God is the source of goodness and not man. The external laws should be kept. When a person sees sin as wanting his own way instead of God's way, it is not difficult. To get him to agree that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

You might ask this man do you really feel that in all your relationships with life, with yourself, and with others, you have lived up to all God intended for you. Now that would be difficult for you to say I have.

There may be other excuses that will come up such as I am too great a sinner. Well, we show them that they are sinners.

Romans 5:12. We show them that no one is too great a sinner to be saved. We show them how to be saved. And use the plan of salvation.

The excuse, I am waiting to make myself better. We should show them that God requires not moral fitness, but faith. Show them the need of being saved at once. (Isaiah 6:15, Ephesians 2:8-9)

There are those who say I can't give up my sin. Show them that God will empower them. (Heb. 7:25) (Eph. 1:19-21) We could show them the result of rejection. (Romans 6:23) Show them what Christ can do.

What about the excuse I can't hold out. Show them that they cannot hold out in their own strength. (John 15:5) Show them that they must appropriate divine strength. (1 Peter 1:5) Show them that unbelievers do not have security. But a believer does. (Eph. 2:8, John 10:28-29)

What about the hard one who says that I have too much to give up to become a Christian? Could we not show them that it is better to give up anything than to be lost forever. (Mark 8:36) Show them that God does not require us to give up anything that is for our highest good. (Psalm 84:11, Romans 8:32)

What about the fellow who says I cannot be a Christian in my present business? We have to show them that this is possible and show them that grace will be supplied to relinquish maybe

the improper business. (2 Cor. 9:8, Pro. 3:6) Show them that God makes provision for life. (1 Tim. 4:8)

The excuse I am afraid I shall loose my friends Show them that Christ is the true friend. (Pro. 18:24; John 15:15). Show them that God leads in the choice of Christian friends. Show them the consequences of choosing Christ-less companions. Show them the blessedness of serving God though it mean the loss of loved ones - so called friends. Ruth left her folks, the Mobites

Well, such excuses as I shall be persecuted. This is the experience of all true Christians. (John 15:18) But it's a glorious privilege to be presecuted for Christ's sake. (Matt. 5:11 Acts 5:40).

These different excuses we might evaluate. Concerning what church membership should mean to Christians. Really involves.

In verse 1 and 2 here is an unlikely episode. There is no word better to describe them than unlikely.

The town was Jericho. It was a wealthy town, large palm forests. It commanded both the approach to Jerusalem and the crossing of the river which gave access to the lands east of Jordan.

It was a most important taxation center of all Palestine. Now the time was in the evening before the crudifixion. Jesus moved back into Jerusalem. With such tension as the crucifixion, it is a wonder that Jesus would take time for one indivi-

For many men have been shipwrecked at this point. Now Zaccheus in the city of Hericaho might be called a man who was in the ring. They successfully avoided exposure and yet there were good streaks in Zaccheus as there are in almost every man. Jesus coming down the street, the Lord of glory; Zaccheus a short man up the sycamore tree. And Jesus inviting him, by saying I'm going home with you, I imagine the crowd regretted to see Jesus make such a choice; such a decision. Christ entered the front door of Zaccheus' house. The king of Heaven and Earth and now sits down and this was the day of salvation for Zaccheus.

Zaccheus (responded) to Jesus. The group praised the Saviour before were not criticizing him. Jesus practically traded a whole town for one person. Jesus must have bothered and gone out of his way to win Zaccheus. The crowd now felt about Jesus as they felt about Zaccheus before.

Another question we might think on is what were some of the evidences that Zaccheus had received salvation? What were some of the changes? In his life that had taken place?

Of course, there was the idea to get; now it is to give. He stated his intention. For Zaccheus received him joyfully. He received Jesus into his house and by his conduct he showed that he had received Jesus as his Saviour.

For receiving was not a passive thing. It was something that (involved action) on the part of Zaccheus. What did he say

would not have likely gotten him the tree. There may be other possibilities suggested.

Second, someone has suggested maybe Matthew told Zaccheus about Jesus. They perhaps were good friends; Matthew being a tax collector. He undoubtedly was acquainted with Zaccheus. And when he became a follower of Jesus, he may have written Zaccheus and told him about his new master. Some of the best opportunities that individuals have to witness are to those that they have contact with in work. These close ties along occupational lines may be closer sometimes than those we have with our neighbors.

Zaccheus may have heard in the third place, that Jesus was a friend of publicans. And sinners. Now to the Jews the word publican was right on the same level with sinner. They felt that it was alright to lie, to a robber and a tax collector. And they were certain that God would not have anything to do with a tax collector. So the Jews felt that Jesus' association was inexcusable. That it discredited Jesus. That he wanted to be a friend to the publicans.

Fourth, there could have been an inner hunger which his wealth and power had not satisfied. Many people set goals for themselves in life but when they are attained, they find an emptiness. No man will ever be completely satisfied outside of the purpose and plan of God for his life.

Occasionally there is a tendency not to witness to people

who are well-educated, cultured, rich or powerful. But behind learning, behind refinement, money, power, there is still a preacher who needs the peace and the joy of a right relationship with God. This dealing with Zaccheus should make us more confident about speaking to people like this.

Whatever the reason, Zaccheus had a desire that was there. The best desire any person can have is to have a right relationship with God. Few persons who have not at some time or another thought seriously about this. That the holy spirit working in their hearts.

Among the problems, What were the problems that Zaccheus had? In getting to see Jesus. Well, he was short. When he got in the street, he still couldn't see Jesus. If he had been anyone else, the people might have moved back for him and let him go through. But he was a little man, he had no friends, and he had to resort to was to go climb a tree.

What about the invitation? What kind of invitation did Jesus give Zaccheus? Zaccheus climbed the tree, got up and had gone unnoticed (5 & 6); and no doubt the people underneath the tree were shouting their abuses at him. But Jesus was not desirous to have the approval of the crowd. He called Zaccheus by name and asked him to come down the tree, announced his intentions of spending the night in his house.

In invitation (was demanding.) It involved not only major adjustments of habits, but a reversal and redirection of his whole life, his whole attitude. It suddenly became clear to Zaccheus that this above everything else made sense. He came down the tree (v.6) and received him joyfully. He had begun the day without purpose and now he has purpose that God is entered his life. He had begun the day with thoughts of his money and ends it with thoughts of the kingdom.

We ought to make clear what the invitation is and what the response must be. Many times when we invite people, we do not make it clear. We say accept me for follow me. Or many times we have allowed the surrendered life to become synonymous with joining the church.

If the invitation of God is faithfully given, it will be blessed.

The purpose of God (v.8-10) we begin right with God is a experience of grace. Man needs forgiveness. He does not deserve; he cannot earn it. But what happened to Zaccheus was not an attempt to become right with God; it was an evidence that he had already changed.

The Bible says that he was a sinner. How many fine men have been ruined by official position? Now this might we all deserve some answers. It's an awful for a man to seek a government job unless his principles and integrity are deeply fixed.

he was going to do? He said first, I'm going to give half of my property to the poor. Well, that was only a half of what was demanded of the young ruler. But here it was no test. For it was a willing, spontaneous offer of repentance and gratitude. Second, he said out of the other half a four-fold restitution of fraudulent gains. Shall be rapid.

Mr. Moody, the American evangelist, used to paint a vivid picture of Zaccheus. And he described the evidence of his conversion as he pictures the clerk of Zaccheus going around the next day with checks paying back all the money that he had stolen from the people in a legal fashion.

Where his former way had been deroged, now he says I will restore the restitution which he offerend. Was (beyond) what even the law had required. Now repentance for that gift was not an escape, an effort to a cheap escape. He meant to pay and restore where he would and what he could.

When evening came in Jericah, the lest likely man in town had become a follower of Jesus. You know, (some of the most unlikely people in this town might become followers of Jesus if we should speak to them about Christ.)

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